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The Mishaps of Minerva

A Farce in Two Acts

By
BERTHA CURRIER PORTER
Author of "Gadsby's Girls," "Pictures in the Fire," "Lucia's Lover," etc.

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
1910

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The Mishaps of Minerva

CHARACTERS

MORTIMER J. STERLING, *an easy-going business man.*
VICTOR BROWN, *a young doctor, friend of the family and especially of Minerva.*
HARRY STEVENSON, *a "cub" reporter, attentive to Clara.*
BARNES, *the butler.*
MIKE SHANNON, *a very new policeman.*
MRS. LYDIA STERLING, *domestic and quiet.*
MINERVA STERLING, *willing to oblige.*
CLARA STERLING, *her younger sister.*
MOLLY, *the maid.*
BELLE BRANTLEY, *reporter for "The Screamer."*
MRS. WRIGHT, *a club woman.*
MISS PALMER, *a philanthropic worker.*
MRS. JENNIE VAN DEUSEN SPUYKER, *a Personage.*
Members of the reception committee.

COSTUMES:—Modern. TIME:—The present.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I.—Living-room of the Sterling home, afternoon before the reception.
ACT II.—Same—the morning after.

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The Mishaps of Minerva

ACT I

SCENE.—*Living-room of the Sterling home. Doors* R. *and* L. *Large window at rear, recessed and curtained. Good-sized desk, very much in disorder and loaded with papers, at side. Telephone on desk. Table, chairs, bookcases, and all the pleasant disarray of a cozy room, much used.* MINERVA STERLING *is seated at the desk, her back to the audience, busily writing.*

MIN. (*coming to the front of the stage with a large basket of envelopes and folded circulars. She puts the circulars hurriedly into the envelopes*). Goodness! I should have done this before. There ought to be an assistant secretary anyway. What time is it? One o'clock? And the mail goes at quarter past. And there is that directors' meeting at two. I don't see why Clara could not have stayed and helped me instead of flying off to the station with mother and father. I don't care if mother did go off to avoid the reception. I really didn't think she would go, though, because she was so worried for fear I shouldn't do everything exactly right. If I can't run this house for two days, even with a reception, my course in domestic science hasn't done me much good. (*Enter* MOLLY.) Well, Molly, what is it?

MOLLY. Please, Miss Minerva, what will you have for dinner?

MIN. Why, I don't know. Have anything you want.

MOLLY. Mrs. Sterling always tells me what to get. She said come to you for orders while she was away.

MIN. I should think it was the cook's business to know what to get to eat. I don't know, I tell you. And I don't care! I shan't have time to eat to-day, anyway.

MOLLY. Very well, miss. But, miss, if you could put up with something easy, because I don't feel very well. I don't

know what is the matter with me, but I'm all broke out, miss, and I'm kind o' nervous because there's a good deal of sickness round, and I didn't know but what I was going to have ——

MIN. (*hurriedly interrupting*). That will be all right. I like that as well as anything.

MOLLY (*indignantly*). Well, of all things!

[*Exit* MOLLY, *flouncing angrily from the room.*

MIN. I do hope the reception will be a success. I was so pleased when they said they wanted to have it here. Of course, having all the clubs, they need a good deal of room, and my house *is* the biggest, and it's very central, but Mrs. Wright said those were minor considerations—they thought I'd make such a nice hostess. That was so sweet of them. And then, of course, as it was going to be here, they made me chairman of the committee so I could have everything the way I wanted it. I wonder if I have attended to all the details? Let me see —— (*Goes to desk and consults a note-book.*) Chairs—yes, they are ordered. Refreshments—yes, they're all right. Waiters—that's all settled, because they thought we'd better depend on Molly and Barnes—it would save expense, and then they are more used to the house than strangers would be. They don't like it very well, though. Napkins—Mrs. George was going to see to those. I'd better ring her up and be sure. (*At telephone.*) Four-one-nine—ring three, please.....What?.....Number changed? Well, give me information.....Hello?.....Hello, information?.....I can't hear you.....I'm calling Mrs. Alvin George, 49 Richmond Terrace. .....Oh, one-seven-one-seven, ring two?.....Thank you..... One-seven-one-seven, ring two? Is Mrs. George there? Yes—oh, good-morning, Mrs. George.....Yes, I'm well, how are you?.....Oh, I'm so sorry—nothing serious, I hope?.....Oh, I'm so glad—it wouldn't be anything without you.....Why, certainly, I'll send the motor for you. Oh, no trouble at all.....Did you see about the napkins?.....Oh, you *didn't?*..... Why, yes, I *can*, only I've so much to do.....Couldn't you order them by telephone?.....He hasn't any? .....Yes, I'm going to the directors' meeting.....Well, it's quite out of my way.....

Enter MOLLY.

MOLLY (*still indignant*). A gentleman to see you, Miss Minerva. It's Dr. Browne, Miss Minerva. And I wish you'd

ask him to look at my arms before he goes—they're all covered with rash and ——

MIN. Hold the line a minute, please. (*To* MOLLY.) I'm too busy to see any one this afternoon, Molly. (*Telephones.*) I'll try, Mrs. George, but —— Why, if she hasn't hung up and left me talking. [*Exit* MOLLY.

Enter VICTOR BROWNE.

VIC. Good-morning, Minerva. I just saw the folks in the auto and I thought I'd find you alone, so I dropped in a minute. It's a horrible hour for a call, but doctors don't have much time, you know.

MIN. Hello, Victor. I'm dreadfully busy to-day. You know we are to have a big reception here to-night, and of course there is a great deal to do.

VIC. And of course you are doing the whole of it as usual.

MIN. I have an engagement at two, and before that I have to get all these circulars in the mail.

VIC. Can I be of assistance? We can talk as we work. (*Looks about.*) Minerva, I think this is the jolliest house ever.

MIN. Yes, it's very well. We have such a large drawing-room, and it lends itself nicely to lectures. The acoustics are good.

VIC. Bother! I didn't mean that. I was thinking about this room. It's so bright and homelike and—liveable, don't you know? (*After a pause.*) I think your mother is a lovely woman.

MIN. (*anxiously*). You're not working very fast, Victor. I wish you would attend to business and not get maudlin about the house. You've seen it often enough. The mail goes at one-fifteen and I thought you could take these to the office as you go along.

VIC. (*blankly*). Oh—yes—well, I'd better say what I came to say if you are in such a hurry. (*He fidgets with a circular, while she works furiously.*) Minerva, I think you must know what I want to tell you. You must have seen ——

MIN. That reminds me. Molly wanted you to see her arms. Shall I call her?

VIC. Not now. My practice now is well enough established to warrant me in maintaining a larger establishment.

MIN. I'm awfully glad, I'm sure. When are you going to move?

VIC. And I feel the time has come when ——

MIN. Oh, Victor, do hurry! It's ten minutes past one. There, they are all done. I'll tie them up and you can put them right in the office as you go along, and they will go out on the next mail. (*He rises.*) I'm ever so much obliged to you. You've been such a help. And you'll come again when you have more time, won't you? Mother will be sorry to miss you.

(*As she forces him toward the door, enter* MOLLY.)

MOLLY. A lady to see you, Miss Minerva.

Enter BELLE BRANTLEY; *exit* MOLLY.

BELLE. Miss Sterling? Miss Minerva Sterling, who is giving the reception to-night? I'm Belle Brantley of the *Screamer*, and I'd like an interview for our series of articles on "Charming Women Whose Lives Are Devoted to Charity." It isn't often that we put in any one who is so young, but your good works are so widely spread that there has been a great demand to have you in the series. Are you engaged to be married?

MIN. Really, this is very unexpected. And I don't think that ——

VIC. (*aside*). She hasn't time to be.

BELLE. The first thing the public wants to know. Now I'd like his picture to put with yours, with a Cupid holding the ends of a bow-knot festooned about them both. Or you might be taken together for this article. Our photographer is outside getting views of the house and grounds. He will be in directly, for the interiors. Are you the only child? It was so nice to have your auto at the gate. He's taken that—a lady kindly sat in it and he took her back. That will save you one pose. I suppose you are dreadfully busy, and I won't detain you but a minute. What are you going to wear at the reception? How much is your father's income? What is your favorite dish? What month were you born in? Are you superstitious? Do you like snakes? Are you fond of nature? Do you design your own clothes? Oh, there is your desk—I'll just glance it over. Desks are so characteristic. I shall get lots of material there.

Enter MOLLY.

MOLLY. Mrs. Wright, Miss Minerva.

Enter MRS. WRIGHT; *exit* MOLLY.

MRS. W. Good-afternoon, Minerva, darling. How is everything? Oh, how do you do, Dr. Browne? (*Archly.*) It's quite a surprise to find you here to-day. Rumor has it that you're very hard on us poor workers. But lovers, we know, Doctor, lovers ——

BELLE (*coming forward*). Oh, Miss Sterling, then you are engaged to Dr. Browne? Glad to know you, Dr. Browne. Aren't you the germ Dr. Browne? And do you really give poor little rabbits and guinea-pigs all sorts of horrid diseases? You haven't any rabbits or things about you now that my man could take a picture of, have you? Then I'll have our artist design some to put around your picture. If you will let me take your picture of him, Miss Sterling, I can get a fine half-tone, and I assure you nothing will happen to it. Would you mind posing for the photographer as you go down the steps, Doctor? The *Screamer* is great on pictures, you know.

VIC. (*stiffly*). I'm not going at present.

BELLE. Oh, there's no hurry. This article won't come out till the Sunday edition. I'm to stay in town till after the reception and write that up too.

MRS. W. Minerva, dear, isn't it lovely? This lady is going to write up the reception. How do you do? I'm Mrs. Wright, second vice-president of the Sorority—my specialty is disinfected ice for the lower classes, and to have it left in germ-proof coverings. Don't you know there are so many horrid little microbes and things in the ponds, and it's almost impossible to kill them? And my theory is that they all freeze up in the ice, and when the ice is melted in ice-water, why, there they are again, all alive, just like frogs in stones, you know. And of course, as the poor people drink the ice-water, they get the germs into their systems, and that makes them have all sorts of horrid diseases, you know.

Enter MOLLY.

MOLLY. Miss Palmer, Miss Minerva.

Enter MISS PALMER; *exit* MOLLY.

MISS P. How do you do, Miss Sterling? Oh, dear Mrs. Wright, how do you do? Good-afternoon, Dr. Browne. No,

thank you, I can stop only a moment. I called, Miss Sterling, from the Willing Workers, to see if you would be kind enough to help us a little on our sale. We hope you will consent to take a table. Each matron is asked to supply fifty dollars' worth of articles, and guarantee to buy whatever is left on the table. We felt we should have a hard and fast rule, and then there wouldn't be any rivalry.

MIN. When is the sale?

MISS P. In about three weeks.

VIC. (*aside to* MIN., *earnestly*). Minerva, surely you won't promise to do any more work. You ought not to.

MIN. (*ignoring him*). Why, Miss Palmer, I am very busy, but you were so kind to think of me. I won't promise, but I think you may count on me.

VIC. (*aloud*). Minerva!

MIN. On second thoughts, Miss Palmer, I will say definitely that I will take a table.

MISS P. Thank you so much, Miss Sterling. Good-bye.

[*Exit* MISS P.

BELLE. So interested in all forms of philanthropy—I have that interview verbatim.

MRS. W. Minerva, I don't want to hurry you, but we shall be late for the meeting if we don't start now. (*To* BELLE.) Would you care to come to the meeting? We are planning to build a club-house, and it may be interesting to you.

BELLE. Thank you—yes.

MIN. You will excuse me, Dr. Browne. You remember I told you I had an engagement.

MRS. W. (*coyly*). Only a business engagement, Doctor. Don't be jealous. Good-bye.

BELLE. Good-bye, Dr. Browne. Perhaps you'll give me an interview at the office later.

[*Exeunt* MIN., MRS. W., *and* BELLE.

VIC. (*absently tying and untying the bundle of circulars*). What do you think of that? And those people are specimens of the ones that Minerva is wearing herself to skin and bone for. Something must be done. She has the worst case of oblige-itis that I have ever seen. Taken in moderation it is rather a good thing, but in acute stages it is sometimes fatal. What can I do? Perhaps nothing till this reception is over. Reception? Isn't there some chance there? (*Muses.*) I'll do it. It will mean sacrificing my moustache, but what is a moustache compared with Minerva?

Enter HARRY STEVENSON *and* CLARA STERLING.

HAR. Hullo, Victor. Where's Minerva? I have to get some points on this shindy to-night. I thought I should get here sooner, but I met Clara and we walked through the park. What are you doing here? I never thought to see you in this business.

VIC. Oh, I'm mailing circulars, and trying to discover an antitoxin for the noxious disease of doing other people's work.

CLARA. I wish you could, and I'd give Min a dose. She needs it more than anybody I know of. There can't any of us manage her. Pa and ma have given up at this last outburst and gone to the gay metropolis over night. They thought it would be quieter than the reception.

VIC. I agree with them. Say, Harry, do you know a sister reporter named Belle Brantley—from the *Screamer?* She is here to write up this reception business, and dogs Minerva like a six-eyed sleuth.

HAR. I've heard of her—never saw her. She's a corker, all right. They must have thought there'd be something doing to send her down here.

CLARA. I wish there would be so much doing that we'd never have another.

VIC. That settles it. Good-bye, dearly beloved, I'm off to perfect a scheme that may realize your fondest hopes. Maybe your Belle will have something worth writing up after all.

CLARA. Oh, what is it, Victor? Tell us.

VIC. I'm going to shave off my moustache and attend the reception—not as Dr. Browne, the germ theorist, but as some one as famous as Dr. Browne hopes some day to be. I'll hide my manly form in flowing robes and gather material and ammunition, and to-morrow and every day I'll limber up my batteries and train them on Minerva till she surrenders.

CLARA. Great—great! But that won't interfere with the reception. We must do something to spoil it. If it is a success she will be worse than ever, and talking won't do any good. We must do something. Harry, can't you help us out?

HAR. We broke up a spread at home once by stealing all the dishes.

CLARA (*excitedly*). That's it! That's it! We'll make her think there's a burglar in the house. If there's one thing Minerva dreads—it's a burglar. She always looks under the bed before she turns out the light.

HAR. But we must tell the servants.

CLARA. They'll be glad to help.

VIC. Better steal them, too. That would clog the wheels some.

CLARA. Victor, that is the suggestion of genius! We will go now and explain and have them called away or something—they can come back to-morrow—and I'll go too, and you'll be away, Victor, and Harry ——

HAR. I'll be off on a detail somewhere, all right.

CLARA. We must get busy. Tempus is a-fugit-ing.

VIC. I must run along and get my costume ready. I shall have to leave the looting to you two.

HAR. We'll attend to that, I assure you. Oh, say, Victor, just stop and put Barnes wise on the way out, will you?

VIC. All right. [*Exit* VIC.

HAR. Where can we hide the stuff?

CLARA. Oh, I hadn't thought of that. We can't leave it here in the house because this reception will recept in every corner. Oh, I know—just the thing! We'll take it all over to Victor's office. Never mind if he isn't there. The janitor knows me and will let me in. And he can bring it all back to-morrow in his auto.

HAR. Fine—great head. Oh, here comes some one—scoot. [*Exeunt* CLARA *and* HAR.

Enter MIN.

MIN. (*flinging herself into a chair*). I'm all tired out! And after we went away down there, there wasn't a quorum so we couldn't do a thing. (*Enter* BARNES.) Well, Barnes, what is it?

BARNES. If you please, Miss Minerva, I've just got word that me mother is very sick and I've got to go at once.

MIN. But, Barnes, you can't go. I'm depending on you for to-night.

BARNES. But, miss, I'm going. [*Exit* BARNES.

MIN. The impudence of him! What shall I do? Oh, I suppose I can get a man from the caterer's.

Enter CLARA.

CLARA. How goes it, Min? Say, I'm awfully sorry, but I'm going away for the night. You don't mind, do you? It's a surprise party—something awfully sudden.

MIN. Why, Clara, I wanted you to help me.

CLARA. What could I do? You said you had everything all planned and there wouldn't be a thing for any one else to do. I'm going anyway, and I'm going now. I've promised. You can get some of the other people to do a little work—it's about time. I'll be home some time to-morrow. Good-bye—hope you have a lovely time. [*Exit* CLARA.

MIN. I think I'd better call up Victor and ask him about getting a butler. (*Goes to telephone.*) Nine-seven-naught, please. Hello, is Dr. Browne in?.....What's that?.....Gone out of town?.....Why, isn't that sudden? He was here just a little while ago. When will he be back?.....Very well—good-bye. That's queer—he must have had an emergency case.

Enter MOLLY, *in tears and terror.*

MOLLY. I've got it, Miss Minerva—oh, I've got it sure! Don't you come near me! Oh, what shall I do?

MIN. Molly, what ails you?

MOLLY. I told you and you thought it was something to eat, and I told Miss Clara and she said it was a rash, but I've been readin' up in the doctor's book, and I've got all the symptoms—oh, I'm so sick—oh, my back! Oh, my poor head! Oh, my poor arms—and the spots are just the right shape!

MIN. (*backing slowly away*). What is it?

MOLLY. Oh, I can't stay here, for you'll catch it; and I can't go out on the street, for they'll catch it—oh—oh—oh!

MIN. (*still backing away*). What—is—it? Speak, for heaven's sake!

MOLLY (*backing away*). Smallpox—smallpox—oh—oh—oh!

(*She cries and laughs hysterically, then rushes from the stage. After a horrified pause,* MIN. *dashes after her.*)

Enter CLARA *and* HAR., *with a large suit case, which they proceed to fill with ornaments and bric-à-brac. They are full of suppressed laughter.*

CLARA. Hustle—hustle! That green vase over there is one of Minerva's favorites. Take that.

HAR. Give me something to wrap it up in. This Venus is altogether too chaste and cold to embrace anything as fragile

as that. I don't want to have to refurnish your father's house —I'd prefer to furnish one for you.

CLARA. I don't see anything but this table cover—take that.

HAR. Isn't it grand about Molly? I told her to get away somehow, but that smallpox idea is a stroke of genius. And luck is with us, having the doc busy. If he should see Minerva in the state she is in now he'd give the whole thing away. I must say I feel rather like a brute myself, but principle holds me firm.

CLARA. Yes, I thought I should scream to see Molly rushing down-stairs and Minerva trying to head her off and yet not get infected. Take that cut-glass bowl—take anything that will hold flowers.

HAR. (*going to desk*). How about the fountain pen?

CLARA. Anything—anything—only hurry! Heavens, what is this awful smell? Oh, I hear her coming.

HAR. Beat it in behind the curtains. I'll hold the fort. If it is Minerva I'll interview her, and if it is a stranger I'll entertain her.

(CLARA *hides in the window. She whispers loudly.*)

CLARA. Shut that suit case.

(*He closes it hastily and sets it by a chair.*)

Enter MIN. *She carries a large bottle of disinfectant and an atomizer, and goes from chair to chair, spraying them. She does not see* HAR.

HAR. What is the matter, Minerva? What are you doing?

MIN. (*starting*). Oh, who is it? How did you get in? Oh, I must not sit down. The chairs are infected.

HAR. Infected? What are you talking about?

MIN. Let me spray you with this disinfectant. (*She chases* HAR. *about the room, while he dodges, trying to escape the spray.*) There, now you are safer. But let me light some joss-sticks. Where are the matches? Harry, haven't you a match? Here, take these. Hold them in your hand and inhale them as you talk. (*She does the same.*)

HAR. But, Minerva, what does this mean? There aren't any mosquitoes in here.

MIN. It's worse than mosquitoes. It's smallpox!

HAR. (*apparently much excited*). Smallpox? Who? What? Where? Are you crazy?

MIN. (*sniffing vigorously at the joss-sticks*). Keep smelling—keep smelling! No, I'm not crazy, but I soon shall be. Molly has the smallpox—she has just gone to the pest-house.

HAR. Molly gone to the pest-house? How did she go?

MIN. In a carriage. I telephoned for one. I didn't tell them she had smallpox, or where she wanted to go. She said she would give them an address near there and walk the rest of the way.

HAR. (*jumping to his feet*). Minerva Sterling! Do you realize what you have done? Sent her off in a public vehicle and exposed countless millions to contagion? How do you know how many people are going to ride in that same carriage? Possibly even to-night some joyous bride may leap lightly onto that very seat and, all unconscious, ride to her loathsome death?

MIN. (*horrified*). Oh, Harry, I never thought of that! And I don't even know the number. What shall I do? What shall I do?

HAR. You can't do anything, except hope that it may turn out to be chickenpox. (*After a pause.*) What are you going to do about to-night? Call it off, I suppose. If it wasn't too late I'd put a notice in the paper for you.

MIN. I guess I shan't call it off now. That is out of the question. Don't you think that all this disinfectant makes it safe enough? I've tried to get Victor and ask him, but he is away for a few days. I don't want to ask anybody else because I don't want any one to know what a mess I am in. And everybody has gone off and left me, and I'm so discouraged and miserable—oh, Harry, do help me!

HAR. Poor girl—have you had any lunch?

MIN. No, there isn't any.

HAR. You go out now and have a good square meal. I'll take care of things here, and you will feel like a different person when you come back. A good sirloin steak will turn the blues into rose color.

MIN. You angel! I was beginning to feel so alone.

[*Exit* MIN.

Enter hurriedly from the window, CLARA.

HAR. Is remorse gnawing at your vitals yet?

CLARA. Not to any appreciable extent. It won't keep me from going down-stairs and getting the silver.

[*Exit* CLARA.

Enter MIN.

MIN. It's no use, Harry. I can't go. There isn't time. It is late now and the extra chairs haven't come, and the caterer's men will be here any minute, and there's a final committee meeting here this afternoon, and the flowers are due, and, oh, there are a million things to do. This house smells to heaven.

HAR. (*encouragingly*). Perhaps they will all have colds in their heads.

(*A confused clamor of voices is heard outside.* MIN. *listens, and as she rises to go and see what it is, enter* BELLE *and* MRS. W., *talking confidentially.* HAR. *slips out.*)

BELLE. And here is the hostess of the evening's function, calm and tranquil. Such poise! I must not forget that in my account.

MIN. (*annoyed*). Oh, Miss Brantley—Mrs. Wright—I did not expect any one so early.

MRS. W. Now don't let us disturb you at all. I thought I would just run in and see if there wasn't some little last thing that I could do. Or is everything ready? And Miss Brantley begged to come too.

BELLE. Yes, if there is anything that I adore it is seeing the inside working of a scheme. And when I have an article to write up I always like to know the ground thoroughly. It is the little intimate touches that the public likes, you know.

MIN. I am sure there is plenty to do. I have telephoned and telephoned, but I can't hurry anything. (*A bell rings.*) There is some one now. If you will excuse me, I will see who it is. My maid has suddenly been obliged to go away.

BELLE. Please let me go—oh, let me do anything that I can. [*Exit* BELLE.

MRS. W. Your maid gone? How provoking! But it is just like the irresponsible creatures. They don't care for any one's convenience as long as their own comfort is undisturbed.

MIN. This was really unavoidable. In fact, I myself insisted that she should go.

Enter BELLE, *with florists' boxes.*

BELLE. Here are the flowers, Miss Sterling. (*She opens the boxes.*) What beauties!

MIN. Where will be the most effective place for them?

MRS. W. These roses should go in front of the mirror. Where is your beautiful green vase, Minerva?

MIN. (*taking out more flowers*). On the mantel.

MRS. W. It isn't here.

MIN. It must be on the table then.

MRS. W. No, it isn't.

MIN. Why, where can it be? Molly must have had it. (*Aside.*) And it hasn't been disinfected. Does glass carry germs?

MRS. W. I'd use another if I could find one. Where are your vases?

MIN. (*looking about*). Gone! And there are other things gone, too. What does it mean? Where is Venus? And the table-cloth? And my desk has been rifled.

BELLE. There has been a burglary.

MIN. (*shrieking*). A burglar? In broad daylight? Call the police! Oh, what next?

BELLE. I wonder if anything else is missing?

MRS. W. Let us go and see.

BELLE. Yes, we must investigate. Another story!

MIN. Don't leave me here alone—I'll go too.

[*Exeunt* MRS. W., BELLE *and* MIN.

Enter CLARA *and* HAR. *They carry a large basket filled with silver and cut-glass.*

CLARA. You stay on guard, and I'll run up-stairs and get Min's jewelry—they have gone down. [*Exit* CLARA.

HAR. Things are moving—things are moving. And the six-eyed sleuth is onto her job, all right. (*He listens.*) Some one approaches. More than one. I must get away with the spoils. Clara will see to herself. [*Exit* HAR., *with basket.*

Enter MIN., BELLE *and* MRS. W., *in great consternation.*

MRS. W. Oh, oh, isn't it terrible? Didn't I see that curtain move?

MIN. All the silver gone, what shall we do? (*With a sudden scream.*) Oh, I never thought—what shall we do for to-night? And it is five o'clock now.

(CLARA *peeks in at the door, but disappears.*)

BELLE. Telephone to the caterer. Tell him to bring everything. (*A bell rings.*)

MIN. Oh, you go!

BELLE. You go!

MRS. W. You go!

BELLE. We'll all go!

[*Exeunt* MIN., BELLE *and* MRS. W.

Enter CLARA.

CLARA (*waving jewelry*). The plot thickens! I always knew a burglar's life must be exciting. Cheer up, sister dear, your troubles are just beginning. I have all your money, too.

[*Exit* CLARA.

Enter MIN., BELLE *and* MRS. W., *all crowding together about a telegram.*

BELLE (*excited*). I didn't know she was in the East.

MRS. W. Have you ever seen her, Miss Brantley?

BELLE. No, have you?

MRS. W. Not to meet her—only at a distance.

MIN. To think of her wanting to come! Isn't it sweet of her?

MRS. W. So fortunate that she should come just at the time of the reception.

MIN. But, oh, look at the house! And look at me! I'll just run up and change my gown. She doesn't say how soon she will come.

[*Exit* MIN.

BELLE. I'll telegraph the *Screamer* at once. This will be a scoop, all right. (*She sits at desk.*)

Enter MIN., *in complete collapse.*

MIN. This house has been ransacked! My jewelry is gone and all my money. If father were only here! I wish this old reception was in the Red Sea.

BELLE. What? More missing? We must do something.

Enter VIC., *disguised as* MRS. JENNIE VAN DEUSEN SPUYKER.

MRS. V. D. S. I rang several times but no one came so I ventured to come up, as I heard voices. I think I have the right address—Miss Minerva Sterling, 49 Greenstone Road?

MIN. (*controlling herself*). Yes, I am Miss Sterling. And you ——

MRS. V. D. S. (*sweetly*). I am Mrs. Jennie Van Deusen Spuyker.

CHORUS (*awestruck*). Mrs. Jennie Van Deusen Spuyker!

BELLE. We should have known you. But I'm sure you will be glad to say a word for publication in the *Screamer*.

MRS. W. Dear Mrs. Spuyker, this is a great honor and so sweet of you to come so informally. If we had known you were in town we should have called on you and begged you to grace the occasion with your presence. The name of Jennie Van Deusen Spuyker is ever a beacon and an inspiration to us.

MRS. V. D. S. Thank you—you are very kind. But I felt sure that I should be welcome. I am always so fortunate in finding hospitality. I heard of your reception to-night, and, being here, did not want to miss such a delightful opportunity to meet my sister workers.

MIN. Your humble followers, Mrs. Spuyker.

MRS. W. Dear Mrs. Spuyker, will you have some tea?

MRS. V. D. S. Thank you.

MRS. W. Minerva, dear, will you have Molly bring up a tray, or shall Mrs. Spuyker go to the dining-room?

MIN. (*aghast*). I will see to it myself. (*Aside.*) Horrors! what shall I do? No food—no knives—no forks—no spoons—no money!

MRS. V. D. S. Don't let me disturb your arrangements. You must be very busy. I can go right down to the dining-room. (*She starts toward the door.*)

MIN. (*a little astonished*). Oh, no, Mrs. Spuyker, I will bring you some tea. [*Exit* MIN.

BELLE. And now, Mrs. Spuyker, I'm Belle Brantley of the *Screamer*. I'm wiring them that you're here. And while we are waiting for the tea perhaps you'd be good enough to give me your views on some of the questions of the day?

MRS. V. D. S. (*uneasily*). My dear Miss Brantley, I must beg you not to mention me at all. I am on a little recuperating trip after my lectures and really I must insist on being entirely incognito as regards the press.

BELLE (*aside*). She must have changed. I always heard she was great on interviews.

MRS. W. I've read every word of your lectures over and over. Tell me, what do you think of disinfected ice for the poor? And ——

Enter MIN., *with the tea-tray, minus all silver.*

MIN. I know you will excuse us, dear Mrs. Spuyker, but my maid was obliged to go away, and I am living a very Bohemian existence to-day. Will you have sugar or lemon in your tea?

MRS. V. D. S. (*off guard*). Sugar—four lumps, same as usual.

MIN. (*astonished*). I beg your pardon?

MRS. V. D. S. Oh, pardon me, I was thinking of something else. I'll take lemon, if you please.

MIN. (*looking at her with sudden suspicion*). There aren't any spoons available. I'm sorry.

MRS. W. Minerva dear, I think I must go home and dress now. The committee will be here right away so you will have plenty of help, and I'm sure Miss Brantley would be only too glad to stay and do what she can. Good-bye for a time, dear Mrs. Spuyker. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again very soon. [*Exit* MRS. W.

MRS. V. D. S. Good-bye. (*To* MIN.) Is your sister at home, Miss Sterling?

MIN. (*with growing suspicion*). No, Clara is away. But how did you know I had a sister? You are an absolute stranger to me. (*Aside.*) Can this woman be other than she seems?

MRS. V. D. S. (*confused*). I—I must have heard some one mention her.

BELLE. I think there is some one at the door, Miss Sterling. It may be the man with the chairs. Shall I go?

MIN. If you would be so kind.

(*As* BELLE *goes out* MRS. V. D. S. *makes a sudden movement as if to open the door for her, but quickly recovers herself.*)

MRS. V. D. S. Are you alone in the house, Miss Sterling?

MIN. (*much alarmed*). What is that to you? Why do you ask me such curious questions? And how did you get into the house, anyway? The door was locked—I distinctly remember now. Who are you? You are not the woman you pretend to be. You know your way about this house although you pretend to be a stranger. You have been here before. There are valuables and jewelry missing. You are not Mrs. Spuyker—you are an impostor! Who are you?

(*They rise, facing each other, but before* MRS. V. D. S. *can make any reply the door is flung suddenly open.*)

Enter BELLE, *who is followed by the eager members of the committee.*

BELLE. Ladies, Mrs. Jennie Van Deusen Spuyker!

(*As they form a noisy, admiring group about* MRS. V. D. S., MIN. *is left alone at the side of the stage. She looks wildly about and makes a gesture of despair as*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same. Time, the next morning.* MIN. *and* MIKE SHANNON *are seated in front, earnestly conversing.*

MIKE. Now phwat did yez say is missin'?

MIN. Two cut-glass vases, one large green vase, one Venetian table cover, one small gilt clock—let me see—one statue of the Venus de Medici ——

MIKE. Phwat statute is that? It ain't in the Manual.

MIN. A statue—a figure, you know.

MIKE. Ah, yis, phwat else?

MIN. All the silver, every knife, fork and spoon in the house.

MIKE. Anny larrge pieces?

MIN. No.

MIKE. Whin did yez miss 'em?

MIN. Yesterday afternoon. And I was at home during the whole time.

MIKE. Do yez suspict annybody? Where was the maid?

MIN. (*shuddering*). She went away very suddenly at noontime.

MIKE (*eagerly*). Thot's it! Thot's it! She tuk the things whin she went. It's as plain as the nose on yer face. We'll locate the gurrl an' recover the things.

MIN. No, she couldn't have taken them. It was impossible. She went in a great hurry and she did not stop to take anything—not even a hand-bag. I saw her go.

MIKE. She moight have taken thim before or she moight have come back ag'in. Was there annything else?

MIN. Oh, yes. All my jewelry—a platinum chain with ruby pendant, three diamond rings, a gold bracelet in the form of a snake, a gold thimble, my watch, a turquoise ring, and, oh, yes, the worst of all. There were others that missed things. You see we were getting ready for a reception last evening and of course everything was in commotion. During the evening Mrs. Wright lost a filagree pin and Mrs. Dunbar lost her purse and when they went home Mrs. George's lace scarf was gone. Of course the house was open all the evening

and some sneak thief may have come in, but it seems very suspicious right after the robbery in the afternoon, now don't you think so?

MIKE. Oi think thot whin we find one av thim we shall find thim all. Now have yez anny suspicions of the people? Can yez account for all thot were here? Were there anny shtrange persons here yisterday?

MIN. Yes, there was one, but—oh, I'm sure she couldn't have had anything to do with it! Though I was suspicious once, but after that everything was all right and no one else seemed to notice anything out of the way.

MIKE. Yez niver can tell. In a case like this, me motto is, "Think ivery man guilty till he proves himself innocent." Wimmen the same—who was she?

MIN. I'm sure my suspicions are unjust.

MIKE. Who was she?

MIN. Oh, she is above suspicion. If I hadn't been so upset about something that had happened just before, I shouldn't have noticed anything probably. She is Mrs. Jennie Van Deusen Spuyker, the celebrity. She came unexpectedly, but she was so sweet and unceremonious. Yet, she did act queerly at one time.

Enter VIC., *minus his moustache.*

VIC. I beg your pardon, Minerva. I thought you were alone. What does this mean? What has happened?

MIN. Oh, Victor, Victor, I'm so glad to see you. I'm so glad you've come home. I've had the most awful time! Molly had the—I mean Molly had to go away, and then a burglar came and stole everything in the house, and last evening three ladies lost things, and they are just as cross with me as can be, although I'm sure I didn't take their things, and I'm all alone, because Clara went away over night and Barnes' mother was sick and he went away, and I tried to get you but you had gone away, and I was so frightened and tired, and I didn't know what to do, so I telephoned the police and they sent Officer Shannon here, and I was just telling him all about it. (*Cries.*)

VIC. You poor little girl—you have had a hard time of it. There, there, don't cry now. How do you do, Officer Shannon? I'm Dr. Browne. This is a pretty mess. Minerva, have you any idea who could have been in the house?

MIN. I haven't any ideas at all—I'm just miserable.

MIKE. Now, Miss Shterling, don't yez feel nervous. We'll have the vagabonds in no time. It seems to me thot if there is annything left here to shteal, and yez say there is ——

MIN. He didn't take the silver service.

MIKE. Sure—thot's it! He'll be back. Anny man thot's bould enough to shteal all day, won't rest while there's anny more to get. All we've got to do is to lay low an' nab him whin he comes.

VIC. I'm inclined to think you're right, officer. But shouldn't you have another man on the job outside? Suppose I go to headquarters and have some one sent to watch the house?

MIKE. Shure an' thot's a good idea, sor. Jist tell 'em thot Moike Shannon's on the trail an' he'll be sindin' for the wagon before long.

VIC. Good! Now, Minerva, don't fret. Everything will be all right before you know it. Just do whatever Officer Shannon advises. Good-bye. I'll be back later and see how things are. [*Exit* VIC.

MIKE. Oi'll jist hide here in the winder behind these very convaynient curtains. You go up-shtairs, Miss Shterling. Keep away from the winders. Shure, if he sees yez lookin' at him, he'll niver come in.

Enter BELLE, *very excited.*

BELLE. Miss Sterling—Miss Sterling—what do you think? We have been tricked by an impostor—basely deceived by an irresponsible person! We must do something at once.

MIN. What do you mean?

BELLE. Mrs. Spuyker wasn't Mrs. Spuyker at all!

MIKE. Ah-h-h, she's the thief.

BELLE. I wired the *Screamer* an account of the reception, and they replied that Mrs. Jennie Van Deusen Spuyker was ill at her home with appendicitis! Now, who was the woman that we entertained? I must find out—it will make a corking story.

MIN. I suspected that woman from the first. Officer, here is our thief. I thought she showed a surprising knowledge of the house.

MIKE. She's the one, no doubt about it!

BELLE. Probably she had been in and out of the house the whole afternoon. Oh, I've just remembered. I found a

partly-smoked cigar on the floor as I came through the dressing-room.

MIN. There wasn't a man in that room during the reception.

BELLE. Probably she was a man!

MIN. In disguise!

MIKE. Probably—they often makes up as wimmen. Now, the thing to do, ladies, is to leave this all to me. Yez go upshtairs as Oi tould yez an' Oi'll shtay here an' catch the burrglar, be he man or woman. No matter phwat ye hear, don't come down till Oi call yez. Because he may be desprit an' Oi'll have to use forrce. But don't be afraid—Moike Shannon is a match for a dozen burrglars. (*A whistle is heard outside.*) There's me man. Oi'll just give him a few directions. (*He leans from the window and shouts.*) Ah, there, Dinny! Hide yersilf behind thot tree, an' if anny man or woman comes into this house don't wait but ring for the wagon, an' thin come to the dure till Oi hands thim out to yez. Oi'm afther a burrglar. Go on, now, ladies—he may be here at anny moment.

BELLE. Oh, isn't it exciting? You'll call us just as soon as anything happens, won't you, officer? Because I am a reporter, and this will be a great scoop for my paper.

MIN. If I live through this, I shall need a rest cure.

MIKE. Shure, Oi'll let ye in on the play.

[*Exeunt* MIN. *and* BELLE.

(MIKE *hides behind the curtains.*)

Enter BARNES, *who stares bewildered at the dismantled room.*

BARNES. Where is everybody? He told me I could come back this morning, but something must have happened. What ails this room? Are they house-cleaning?

(*He goes toward the desk.* MIKE *watches him, creeps out and finally seizes him.*)

MIKE. The game's up, me bye! Doan't shtruggle now. So he tould ye to come back, did he? Oi guess 'twas yersilf did the tellin'. Ah, 'twas a moighty clever thrick to come to the reciption, all dressed up in wimmen's clothes, but ye shouldn't have shmoked the cigar. Such a little thing, but it give yez dead away. Come along now. Oi know a place where ye're wanted bad.

BARNES. What does this mean? Let me go, sir. How came you here, anyway? Where is Miss Sterling?

MIKE. That doan't go now. Ye'll see Miss Shterling soon enough, when she testifies against ye. Where's her gold chain? An' her watch? An' all the silver? An' the statute? But it's only fair to tell yez thot annything ye say will be used ag'inst ye.

BARNES. I don't know what you're talking about. Take your hands off me. I am Mr. Sterling's chauffeur.

MIKE. Shure ye are—ye shtick to it, me bye. We'll give ye a nice little ride in a machine where a policeman will do the shofin'. Thot'll be about good enough for yez. Come on, now, there's a gintleman waitin' for ye down at the door.

BARNES. But this is all a mistake! It is an outrage, I tell you.

(BARNES *is dragged off, still protesting. In a moment* MIKE *reappears, somewhat breathless.*)

MIKE (*calling at the door*). Miss Shterling—you reporter woman—say, it's all over! Oi've got him!

Enter MIN. *and* BELLE.

MIN. We heard an awful noise—did you have a fight?

BELLE. Who is he, officer?

MIKE. Thot was a cinch. He give me a lot o' guff, but Oi didn't take no stock in him. He's on his way to headquarters now. They'll soon find out about him. Iverything's over now but the thrial.

MIN. What did he look like? Was he tall and thin? She was.

MIKE (*puzzled*). No—no, he was kind o' shorrt an' fat.

BELLE. Perhaps he isn't the right one. Perhaps you've made a mistake.

MIKE (*indignant*). Shure, he's the roight one, all roight. Do ye think Oi'd be fool enough to arresht the wrong man? Oi'd be sued. Oi have it! He's a confedrit. They mosht always has a confedrit. He was sayin' somethin' about "He tould me so an' so."

BELLE. That's it!

MIKE. An' whin he don't come back the principal will be comin' to see what's kept him. Ye'd betther hide ag'in, ladies. We haven't got to the bottom o' this yit.

MIN. Perhaps you are right. Come, Miss Brantley.

[*Exeunt* MIN. *and* BELLE.

(MIKE *hides again. Enter, very cautiously,* CLARA *with* MIN.'S *jewelry.* MIKE *watches with great glee. As she goes across the room, he seizes her. She screams and drops the jewelry.*)

MIKE. Ah-ha, my lady! Ye got tired o' waitin' fer him, didn't ye?

CLARA. How dare you touch me, you ruffian? And what are you doing in my house, anyway? (*Aside.*) Heavens! Minerva has called in the police. Here's a pretty mess!

MIKE (*noticing her consternation*). Be careful phwat ye say now. Ivery worrd will be used against yez. Ye can't git away—the house is surrounded. Oi jist hand ye over to Dinny outside here an' he'll see to ye. Give me the jewelry now. It'll be aisier than being searched at the station.

CLARA. Searched? Good gracious! The man takes me for a thief! Look here, officer, this is all a mistake. Let go of me now and I'll explain ——

MIKE. Go on with yez—thot's phwat they all say. But you're a bould one to deny it with the goods right on ye.

CLARA. It's all a joke, I say. I'll tell you all about it.

MIKE. Shure, it's a foine joke, Oi'm thinkin'. Tell it to His Honor in the marnin' an' see how it shtrikes him.

CLARA. You don't mean to lock me up?

MIKE. Shure not—we niver lock up burrglars! Hand over the shtuff, now.

(*He takes the rest of the jewelry from her and leads her to the door. She struggles ineffectually and calls "Minerva —oh, Minerva!" Exeunt* MIKE *and* CLARA.)

Enter MIN. *and* BELLE.

MIN. I thought I heard some one calling for help, didn't you? It sounded like a woman's voice. (*Sees jewelry on the floor.*) Look! Look! my chain and pendant! He has caught the thief! (*They rush to the window.*) There goes the wagon—there is some one in it! Don't you think you see a woman's dress?

BELLE. Here comes the officer.

Enter MIKE.

MIKE. Ye see yer jewelry's back all safe, Miss Shterling. Oi tould ye we'd git it. Just see if it's all there, an' then Oi have to take charge of it till afther the thrial. We'll have to use it for evidence to-morrow.

MIN. Yes, it is all here, just as I kept it. Oh, tell me, how did you catch the thief?

MIKE. 'Twas dead easy. She came a-creepin' in, lookin' fer her pal, an' just as she was goin' up-shtairs afther some more Oi grabbed her.

MIN. She was going up-stairs? She might have found us! Tell me, was she very desperate-looking? Did she look like a hardened criminal?

MIKE. Oh, she's a crook, all right.

BELLE. But wasn't it funny that she had the jewelry with her? I shouldn't think she would bring it back again.

MIKE. She didn't dare dispose of it till she had found out about her pal.

MIN. We haven't found the silver yet.

MIKE. Ah, there's more of them! Probably there's a whole gang—yis, thot's it—there's a regular gang of 'em. An' they won't shtop with phwat they've got. Especially now two of 'em are nabbed. They niver desert a pal.

MIN. Do you really think there are any more?

(*A noise is heard outside, also a cautious whistle.*)

MIKE. There's one comin' now. Don't ye hear Dinny's whistle? Git a move on! Hustle up-shtairs now an' lock yerselves in. They'll be gittin' more desprit from now on. (*Exeunt* MIN. *and* BELLE. MIKE *hides quickly, and in a moment, enter* HAR., *with the Venus under his arm.* MIKE *pounces on him at once.*) Begorra, another wan with the goods on him! Come, boy, put down yer lady frind an' take a little walk wid me.

HAR. Thunder, there's somebody here. What—look here, officer, what do you take me for?

MIKE. For larceny, that's all. Of a statute. An' Oi don't want no cheap talk, nayther. Burrglars is comin' thick an' fasht, an' Oi got all Oi can do to handle 'em.

HAR. Well, I'm no burglar, so take your hands off me. I haven't stolen anything. I took this at the request of a lady ——

MIKE. So she's the boss, is she? Oi thought she was a shmart one. Much obliged for the information.

HAR. This was only taken for a joke. There isn't anything stolen. Everything is all safe, right over on the next street.

MIKE. Phwat's thot ye say?

HAR. You'll find all the missing articles over to Dr. Browne's rooms, right around the corner.

MIKE. Thot may be all right, but the lady tould me a statute was shtolen an' Oi got yez with the statute right on ye, an' Oi don't let ye go nayther. (*Drags* HAR. *to the window and calls.*) Dinny—oh, Dinny, go round on the next shtreet an' see phwat ye find in Dr. Browne's rooms. This guy says the shtuff is there. Is the wagon come?

HAR. Surely you will let me wait here? I'm a reporter——

MIKE. Oh, yis, ye are—an' ye'd like to reporrt the news of yer capture to the rest of the gang, wouldn't ye? An' warn thim whin they come lookin' after ye? Well, the chief of police is very anxious about the shtate o' yer health, so down to headquarters ye go now to let him see ye're alive.

HAR. This is an outrage! I'll have you dropped from the force. I'll have your buttons.

MIKE. Ye'll have me boot if ye don't quit kickin'. Come along now. (*Exeunt* MIKE *and* HAR., *scuffling. Enter* MIKE. *An auto is heard outside. He looks from the window.*) By jiminy, this one's come in a taxicab! Ain't thot foxy, now? They've come for the big pieces! An' there's the man disguised, too. The boss has come at lasht! Mike Shannon, this is your day! (*He hides. Enter* MRS. LYDIA STERLING. *She looks about in dismay at the state of the room.* MIKE, *aside.*) Oi'll just wait till she takes somethin'.

MRS. S. Look at this room! Where is everything? Why, there isn't a thing where it should be.

(*She goes to the mantel and moves a vase.*)

MIKE (*dashing out at her*). Come on, come on, your pals are waitin' fer yez.

MRS. S. (*sreaming*). An officer—help! Help!

MIKE (*much excited*). None o' thot now. Nobody'll help ye. Dinny Eagan is on the outside lookin' in, and Mike Shannon is on the inside lookin' out, an' the game is up! How

many more o' yez are there? Come on, now, it's your turn for the free ride this toime. (*She is hustled out bewildered.*)

[*Exeunt* MIKE *and* MRS. S.

Enter MIN. *and* BELLE, *with a tray of lunch.*

MIN. Wasn't it clever of you to think he might be hungry? I'm so upset I can't think of anything. You see, we never had burglars before. That wagon has just gone off again, hasn't it? I suppose he has caught another.

BELLE. I've found out that men are always ready to eat. And he really has had an awfully hard morning's work. Nearly every one has resisted, I should think. This makes four, doesn't it?

MIN. I don't know. I've lost count. Oh, dear, it seems as if he had been arresting burglars forever! (*Enter* MIKE.) Oh, Mr. Shannon, Miss Brantley thought you might be hungry, so we ventured to go down-stairs and get you a little lunch. It isn't very much and there aren't any knives and forks, but perhaps you can manage.

(*They sit either side of him. He takes the tray on his knees and they wait on him.*)

MIKE. Now this is very koind of yez.

BELLE. Have you captured all the burglars now, do you think?

MIN. You must be an awfully smart officer. I always thought it took a lot of policemen to catch a burglar.

MIKE. Thank ye. Well, we may have all the thieves, but now we have to get the receivers. Ye see one of thim confessed ——

BELLE. Confessed?

MIKE. Yis—an' my man's round now, lookin' up the place.

MIN. Is it near by?

MIKE. 'Tain't more'n ten miles away. (*A whistle is heard outside.* MIKE *goes to the window and talks in a low voice; comes back, excited.*) The thing's more complicated than we thought. He hasn't got the man, but he's found the things. He's got 'em down at the door now. Iverything is there. But he's found somethin' else—a suit o' women's clothes, an' it is a man's room.

MIN. Women's clothes?

BELLE. Mrs. Spuyker!

MIN. Then she *was* a man!

BELLE. I'll run down and get the things. [*Exit* BELLE.

MIKE. We've got his discription if we haven't got him, an' he's been seen headin' for this house. If we could git him we'd probably be able to unravel the whole thing. Now ye'd better git back into hidin' again, because he's probably the ringleader, an' he'll be good an' desprit. I'll have my gun handy.

(*He takes out his revolver.* MIN. *screams.*)

MIN. Put that away!

Enter BELLE *with large basket of missing articles and costume worn by* MRS. V. D. S.

BELLE. Everything is here, just as you said, officer.

MIN. There is my green vase. Oh, and here's all the silver. And that is the very dress Mrs. Spuyker wore.

BELLE. Yes, and her gloves and hat. (*Smells of them.*) Phew, how they smell of stale tobacco!

MIKE. He's the ringleader, sure enough. We've got enough to hang him, once Oi git hold of him. An' as he's likely to be here at anny minute, ye'd better go now. If he should resist, it wouldn't be pleasant to see.

(*Exeunt* MIN. *and* BELLE. MIKE *hides.*)

Enter VIC.

VIC. I wonder how the scheme worked. Poor little girl—I'm beginning to think it was a pretty mean game, since I've seen the papers. Mrs. Spuyker must be astonished if she ever sees them. I wonder where Minerva is?

(*He goes to the door.*)

MIKE (*dashing out with revolver and billy*). Surrender now! Mike Shannon has got yez. Throw up yer hands!

VIC. Put down that gun! Are you crazy? Don't you know who I am?

MIKE. Thot's just the rayson Oi have the gun—throw up yer hands!

VIC. What is the matter with you? Don't you recognize me? I was here an hour ago, talking with you and making arrangements. Have you caught the burglar?

MIKE. Oi've caught siveral o' thim, an' now Oi've caught yez. Ah, it's moighty innercent ye were! Throw up yer hands, widout any more worrds about it. (*He advances upon* VIC. *with the revolver.*) A shmarrt thrick it was, comin' ag'in in the avenin', all dhressed up in women's clothes. You're a bould rascal—Oi say thot fer yez—but ye didn't think it was Mike Shannon thot would be on yer thrail.

VIC. (*confused*). How did you know that?

MIKE. Up with yer hands, Oi tell yez. (VIC. *throws up his hands.*) How does Mike Shannon know annythin'? An' thot poor woman ye was impersonatin' sick in Chicago with appendicitis. Yis, but there's tilegraphs nowadays an' reporters an' shmarrt policemen, an' between thim all, they've got ye, me foine birrd!

VIC. It was quite harmless, I assure you. Only a little masquerade. I have just come to tell Minerva—Miss Sterling—all about it. I had an object you know nothing of. Put down that gun now and let me explain.

MIKE. Keep yer hands up there! Oi know all about yez and yer object. The silver was an object, an' the jewelry was an object, an' Mrs. Wright's filagree pin was another object, an' Mrs. Dunbar's purse was a good, fat object, an' Mrs. Gray's lace scarf. To say nothin' o' the china an' bric-à brac that's just been found in yer rooms. Look behind ye an' see it if ye want to.

VIC. Found in my rooms? All that stuff?

MIKE. Aw, ye're a good bluffer. Come on an' tell it to the Chief. Marrch now—Oi hear the wagon. (VIC. *goes toward the door, his hands high above his head, followed by* MIKE, *covering him with the revolver, and swinging his billy in his other hand. The door opens suddenly. Enter* MR. STERLING.) Halt! Shtand where ye are, or Oi fire!

MR. S. Victor, what are you doing? An officer—what does all this mean?

MIKE (*to* VIC.). Be careful phwat ye say now. Oi listenin'.

VIC. If you can convince this asinine guardian of the peace who I am, you will be doing me a great favor, Mr. Sterling.

Enter MIN. *and* BELLE. MIN. *rushes to her father.*

MIN. Father—father—oh, I'm so glad you've come. Why, Victor, what makes you hold your hands in that ridiculous position? (*Sees* MIKE.) Put away that revolver, officer. These

aren't any burglars. This is my father, and this the man I'm going to marry.

(Vic. *expresses astonishment and delight.*)

Mike. But he's the burrglar—he's the woman! The clothes were found in his room!

Min. In his room? Victor!

Vic. Listen, dearest; I did it for a joke—a sorry joke as it has turned out.

Mr. S. Will some one explain this to me? Why is this officer in my house? Minerva, what have you done now?

Min. Oh, father, I haven't done anything. But we've had a burglary and lots of things have been stolen. But all of them have been recovered now, and the burglars are all caught and locked up. This officer did it, and he was waiting for the ringleader who was seen coming this way, and he mistook Victor for him.

Mike. I tell ye the things was in his room. There ain't no mistake.

Vic. Let me explain. Mr. Sterling, in a spirit of mischief —no, not that either, but with the best intentions in the world, I attended the reception here last night, disguised as a woman.

Min. You—were you Mrs. Spuyker?

Vic. I hoped to get evidence that would prove conclusively to Minerva that she was giving too much of her time and her energies to society. But it now seems that certain articles were taken from the house at various times during the day, and others were missed during the evening. You see them here on the floor, and this officer insists that they were found in my rooms, but how they came there I know no more than you do.

Mr. S. It's a pretty muddle, I must say. Minerva, where is your mother?

Min. I haven't seen her—didn't she come with you?

Mr. S. She came on ahead in a taxicab about fifteen minutes ago.

Min. Came here?

Vic. Judging from my experience perhaps this officer may be able to tell us something about her.

Mr. S. Officer, have you seen anything of a tall, thin lady in a blue dust coat and veil?

Mike (*putting away his revolver*). Oi sent a lady like thot to the station along with the rest.

Min. Arrested my mother? Oh, you brute!

MR. S. My wife in the police station! [*Exit* MR. S.

MIN. Oh, what have I done? Oh, Victor, help me! Why did I ever think I could do anything? Poor mother—what must she think?

MIKE. Oi think Oi'll be shteppin' outside. If yez want anythin' ye can call me. (*Aside.*) Begorra, it looks as if Moike Shannon had put his fut in it. [*Exit* MIKE.

VIC. There, dear, don't cry. It was an unfortunate mistake—that's all. But I can't understand how those things came in my rooms.

MIN. Everybody will know all about it.

(*The telephone rings.*)

BELLE. I'll answer it. (*At the telephone.*) Yes, this is Mrs. Sterling's; what is it?.....Oh, Mrs. Wright, yes..... Found your pin.....Caught on your evening wrap.....I'm very glad—good-bye. (*To* MIN.) That was Mrs. Wright. She says she found her pin on the way home, caught on her evening cloak, and she forgot to tell you about it before.

VIC. She isn't very thoughtful.

MIN. Then that wasn't stolen, anyway. They can't accuse you of that, Victor. (*The telephone rings.*) Let me answer this—perhaps it is some more good news.....Yes, this is Minerva right here.....Father? yes.....have you found mother? .....What? (*Her voice rises to shrieks.*) Clara? and Harry and Barnes? Oh—oh —

(*She faints, dropping the receiver.* VIC. *catches her, and* BELLE *tries to continue the conversation, but gets no reply.*)

BELLE. Hello—hello—well, what does all this mean anyway?

VIC. I'm sure I don't know. Evidently Minerva and this fool of an officer seem to have succeeded in getting the whole family incarcerated. (*To* MIN., *who recovers.*) Minerva, tell me all about it.

MIN. (*hysterically*). I don't know! I can't understand it. Barnes went off to see his mother and Clara went away to stay over night, and now they are locked up in the police station. Why, Victor, you've shaved off your moustache.

VIC. Yes, dear. Mrs. Spuyker didn't have any.

BELLE. Miss Sterling suspected Mrs. Spuyker a little yesterday when you showed such familiarity with the house. And

this morning we found your cigar in the dressing-room. We thought you were the thief.

MIN. Do you suppose it could have been Clara—that woman I saw in the police wagon? Oh, the poor child!

BELLE. What a story—what a corking story.

Enter MR. S., MRS. S., CLARA, HAR. *and* BARNES.

MR. S. Here they are! All your family, Minerva, booked on the police blotter for larceny, burglary and assault on an officer. I've bailed them out, but it's up to you to straighten the tangle.

MIN. (*sobbing*). I can't! I can't! I don't know anything about it. Oh, mother, don't ever go away again and leave me to run the house.

CLARA. I suppose I may as well tell. I'm the one that's most to blame. I started the whole thing. I said I'd like to play a trick on Minerva, and ——

HAR. No, she isn't. I'm the guilty one. We were going to play a nice trick on Minerva, and it has landed back on us like a boomerang. But I put her up to it. We took away a lot of things to make Minerva think there had been a burglary and get her wild. We put them all over in Victor's rooms, and before we could bring them back Minerva had called in a policeman and he pinched the whole bunch of us.

MIN. That doesn't explain about the purse and scarf.

Enter MOLLY, *with purse and scarf.*

MOLLY. Please, Miss Minerva ——

MIN. (*screaming*). Oh, go away! Go away! How did you get out? Don't go near her, anybody! Don't come near us—stay where you are! Stay where you are!

ALL. What is it? What is it? What is the matter?

MIN. I forgot the worst of all. Molly has the smallpox!

MRS. S. Poor child—all this excitement has been too much for her. She doesn't know what she is saying.

MOLLY. Oh, no, I haven't, Miss Minerva. It's only a rash. And Mr. Harry told me I could come home this morning ——

MIN. So you sent Molly away, did you? And Barnes too, I suppose?

HAR. The whole push.

MOLLY. So I came home and went right to work, Miss

Minerva, for the house is in such a mess, and when I was cleaning up I found these under the piano.

BELLE. The purse and scarf!

VIC. Now everything is accounted for. Nothing is stolen and we're all as good as new.

MIN. The policeman is still here.

VIC. But he hasn't any case. Nothing is missing.

MIN. Yes, all my money.

CLARA (*turning away and stooping over*). Here's your money. They didn't have time to search me at the station.

VIC. A scheme—a scheme! We'll return all these things to their proper places, call in the officer, and show him that his case has fallen through for lack of evidence. Come on, everybody, get busy. (*They hurriedly restore the room to its normal condition, talking and explaining.*) Now, call him in.

MR. S. Officer, come in here. (*Enter* MIKE. *He looks about in astonishment.*) Officer, when my daughter called you in, I suppose she gave you a list of all missing articles?

MIKE. Yis, sor.

MR. S. Look about you now and see if they have not all been replaced.

MIKE (*after a careful survey*). They shure have.

MR. S. Then your duty is done. You may report to your superior that all the missing articles have been found and that the complainant refuses to prosecute. I am a member of the police commission, and although you may have been overzealous in arresting my family wholesale, in view of the results I shall recommend you for advancement. Your case will fall through, but perhaps you won't mind it, under the circumstances?

MIKE. Very well, sor. Thank you, sor. Thin I'd better dismiss Dinny Eagan an' we'll be goin'.

VIC. Wait a moment, officer. I'd like to shake hands with you. You don't know it, but you've done me a good turn. When you had me at your mercy did you hear what that young lady (*pointing to* MIN.) called me?

MIKE (*grinning*). Shure, she said yez was the man she was goin' to marry, sor.

VIC. Thanks. I was under that impression myself. I've been trying to make her say that for several months, so you can see what your revolver did for me.

MIN. I think I shall have to keep my word, Victor. I surely need somebody to take care of me, after this experience.

MRS. S. And I'll stay at home and run the wedding reception myself.

MIN. And Officer Shannon will come and guard the presents.

MR. S. *Lieutenant* Shannon, if I have any influence.

VIC. Bully, bully. (*Sings.*)

"For he's a jolly good fellow."

(*All join hands and dance about* MIKE, *singing:*)

ALL. "For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
As nobody can deny!"

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